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Soviet's European Spy Network Floundering

Dependence on Italian Chutist Backfires as Trail Leads to Several Operatives

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WASHINGTON — If

Russia's spy masters have learned anything lately about the espionage business, they've discovered things.

Never depend on parachutists.

Soviet intelligence networks in Europe and the Mediterranean area are in trouble.

The Russian disenchantment with Italian parachutists began March 15 with the arrest in Turin of early-hammer Giorgio Rinaldi. A demonstration jumper at European air shows, Rinaldi was discovered to have been a Soviet agent in a link between some Italian spy rings and U.S. installations.

Confesses Acts

After his arrest, Rinaldi began telling Italian officers about his work and, more important from their standpoint, about his collaborators.

Within six weeks of Rinaldi's arrest, four Soviet spies posing as diplomats and another as a Russian airline official were expelled from Italy, Cyprus and Greece.

In the same period, perhaps alarmed at this exodus and the possibility their work might attract attention, Col. Mikhail Badin hastily boarded a plane in Vienna and flew home to Moscow. In Rome, Alexei Solovov did the same. Badin had been military attache at the Soviet Embassy in Vienna; Solovov was ostensibly a clerk in the military attache's office at the Soviet Embassy in Rome.

Kept Notes

Further, to the Soviets' dismay, Rinaldi turned out to have been an assiduous note-keeper. Memos and notes about his work were found in an antique shop he operated as a sideline to his espionage activities.

Rinaldi's disclosures, along with his notes and past travels, suggested the Russians were operating spy rings in Spain, France and Switzerland, in addition to the countries from which the five Russian agents had been expelled. It is uncertain if Rinaldi's disclosures and writings will bring a breakup of Soviet intelligence networks in those countries. But more European arrests of Russian spies are expected.

Troubles Mount

The Rinaldi episode, impressive as its developments have been, only further emphasizes the troubles the Russians are having with their spy networks in Europe.

For, in several months before that incident, two Soviet airline (Acroflot) officials had been expelled from The Netherlands as spies, a Tass correspondent was kicked out of Belgium as an intelligence operative, two Russians in Belgium were implicated in an espionage episode, and several Norwegians were collared in their homeland as suspected Russian spies.

Thus, as a result of those incidents and the Rinaldi

episode, Soviet intelligence networks have been disrupted in Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Belgium, The Netherlands, Austria, Spain, France and Switzerland. Presumably they must be repaired, so further Soviet spy work can be expected in those countries.

The Rinaldi and several other recent Soviet spy cases suggest several conclusions:

The agents involved seemed interested primarily in military information—NATO, Western aircraft and air defense systems—and presumably were working for the Soviet military intelligence service GRU.

GRU has been indiscreet in some of its espionage work. In one case, a European recently taken into custody as a suspected Russian spy had been given the real instead of the code names of Soviet contacts.

It is possible the Western thrusts against GRU agents in Europe may trigger arguments between the military and the other prime intelligence service in Moscow, with the latter, the KGB, insisting it be assigned wider espionage responsibilities abroad.

As far as can be determined from published reports abroad, the United

States was involved obliquely in only one of this year's Soviet spy cases in Europe, an affair more interesting for its disclosures about Russian espionage procedures and cross-links than for its American flavor.

The case centered on a still-unidentified Belgian woman. She had been recruited as a spy by a Soviet diplomat while she was working in a nonsensitive post in an American embassy in North Africa.

On her return to Belgium, she was "passed" successively for spy assignments to Tass correspondent Anatoli Ogorodnikov, to the diplomat who recruited her, to a Russian movie distributor

who had brought a "War and Peace" film to Belgium, and then to a third secretary in the Soviet Embassy in Belgium.

The diplomats apparently were more than diplomats, the Tass correspondent something more than a reporter and the movie distributor interested in other things than films.